

What is claimed is:

1. A method of acquiring an image of a moving item in a path in a mailing machine using an imaging device and an illumination source positioned relative to the path, wherein the image includes a discernible feature of the moving item, the imaging device having a field-of-view covering at least a portion of the path, the illumination source capable of providing a flash of light for illuminating at least a part of the field-of-view of the imaging device, wherein the imaging device is capable of acquiring the image in at least one image frame at a time and providing at least one electronic signal indicative of a sync pulse in synchronization with said image acquiring, said method comprising the steps of:
 - providing a triggering signal based on said at least one electronic signal;
 - in response to the triggering signal, causing the illuminating source to provide the flash of light for illuminating the moving item at least partially entering the field-of-view; and
 - acquiring the image of the moving item while it is illuminated by the flash of light, wherein the flash of light has a flash duration sufficiently short as compared to the motion of the moving item so as to produce said discernible feature of the moving item in said image.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein the triggering signal is provided when the moving item entering the field-of-view has reached a predetermined point in the path.
3. The method of claim 1, wherein the imaging device comprises a video camera, and the sync pulse is provided by the video camera at a field rate.
4. The method of claim 1, wherein the imaging device comprises a video camera providing two vertical synchronization signals for each image frame, and the sync pulse is selected from one of said two vertical synchronization signals.

5. The method of claim 4, further comprising the step of providing a sensing signal when the moving item having reached a predetermined point in the field-of-view of the image device, wherein the triggering signal is provided also based on the sensing signal.
6. A system for acquiring an image of a moving item in a path in a mailing machine using an imaging device and an illumination source positioned relative to the path, wherein the image includes a discernible feature of the moving item, the imaging device having a field-of-view covering at least a portion of the path, the illumination source capable of providing a flash of light for illuminating at least a part of the moving item entering the field-of-view of the imaging device, wherein the imaging device is capable of acquiring the image in at least one image frame at a time and providing at least one electronic signal indicative of a sync pulse in synchronization with said image acquiring, said system comprising:
a detection mechanism, positioned relative to the path, for providing an arrival signal indicating that the moving item entering the field-of-view has reached a predetermined point in the path; and
an electronic circuit, in response to the arrival signal, for providing a triggering signal based on said at least one electronic signal to cause the illuminating source to provide the flash of light for illuminating said moving item while the image is acquired, wherein the flash of light has a flash duration sufficiently short as compared to the motion of the moving item so as to produce said discernible feature of the moving item in said image.
7. The system of claim 6, wherein the triggering signal is provided when the moving item entering the field-of-view has reached a predetermined point in the path.
8. The system of claim 6, wherein the imaging device comprises a video camera, and the sync pulse is provided by the video camera at a field rate.

9. The system of claim 6, wherein the imaging device comprises a video camera providing two vertical synchronization signals for each image frame, and the sync pulse is selected from one of said two vertical synchronization signals.
10. The system of claim 6, wherein the detection mechanism comprises a photosensor.
11. The system of claim 9, wherein the electronic circuit comprises a pulse dividing circuit for selecting the sync pulse.
12. An image acquisition system for use in viewing a moving item in a path in a mailing machine, said imaging system comprising:
- an imaging device, having a field of view covering at least a portion of the path, for acquiring an image of the moving item, the image including a discernible feature of the moving item;
 - an illuminating source, positioned relative to the field-of-view of the imaging device, for providing a flash of light for illuminating at least a part of the moving item entering the field-of-view of the imaging device;
 - a detection mechanism, positioned relative to the path, for providing an arrival signal indicating that the moving item entering the field-of-view has reached a predetermined point in the path; and
 - an electronic circuit, in response to the arrival signal, for providing a triggering signal based on said at least one electronic signal to cause the illuminating source to provide the flash of light for illuminating said moving item while the image is acquired, wherein the flash of light has a flash duration sufficiently short as compared to the motion of the moving item so as to produce said discernible feature of the moving mail-related item in said image.
13. The image acquisition system of claim 12, further comprising a storage device, operatively connected to the imaging device, for storing the acquired image.

14. The image acquisition system of claim 12, further comprising an image displaying unit, operatively connected to the imaging device, for displaying the acquired image.
15. The image acquisition system of claim 12, wherein the imaging device comprises a video camera, and the sync pulse is provided by the video camera at a field rate.
16. The image acquisition system of claim 12, wherein the imaging device comprises a video camera providing two vertical synchronization pulses for each image frame, and the sync pulse is selected from one of said two vertical synchronization pulses.